

Application Serial No. 10/788,840
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Listing of the Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A method of automatically performing liquid microextraction analysis on a plurality of samples in separate vials comprising the steps of:
controlling movement of a syringe in multiple axes;
cleaning the syringe;
drawing a carrier solvent into the syringe;
moving the syringe to a sample vial;
inserting a tip of the syringe into the vial;
collecting a portion of the sample in the syringe;
withdrawing the syringe from the sample vial;
moving the syringe to an instrument injector;
injecting the sample into the instrument injector for analysis of the sample; and
repeating the prior steps on each of the plurality of samples.
2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of collecting the sample comprises the steps of:
activating a syringe plunger to expel and hold a microdrop of the solvent on the tip of the syringe;
holding the microdrop on the tip of the syringe in the sample vial for a period of time to collect the sample material in a space above the sample in the vial; and
drawing the microdrop and the collected portion of the sample into the syringe.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
placing a plurality of sample vials in a holder in established coordinate positions.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
providing a syringe cleaning solution in a known coordinate position.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the step of cleaning the syringe comprises the steps of:

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moving the syringe to the cleaning vial and withdrawing contents of the cleaning solution into the syringe; and
expelling the cleaning solution from the syringe into a waste receptacle.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of inserting the syringe into the sample vial further comprises the step of:

inserting the syringe into the sample vial to position the tip of the syringe in a head space above a liquid sample in the vial.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of inserting the syringe into the sample vial further comprises the step of:

inserting the tip of the syringe into the liquid sample in the sample vial.

8. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for automatically performing liquid microextraction analysis of a plurality of samples in separate vials, the apparatus comprising:

means for controlling movement of a syringe in multiple axes;
means for cleaning the syringe;
means for drawing a carrier solvent into the syringe;
means for moving the syringe to a sample vial;
means for inserting a tip of the syringe into the vial;
means for collecting a portion of the sample in the syringe;
means for withdrawing the syringe from the sample vial;
means for moving the syringe to an instrument injector;
means for injecting the sample into the instrument injector for analysis of the sample.

9. (New) A method of automatically performing liquid microextraction analysis on a plurality of samples in separate vials comprising:

controlling movement of a syringe and sample vial in multiple axes relative to one another;
cleaning the syringe;
drawing a carrier solvent into the syringe;

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moving the syringe and sample vial relative to one another;
inserting a tip of the syringe into the vial;
collecting a portion of the sample in the syringe;
withdrawing the syringe from the sample vial;
moving the syringe and an instrument injector relative to one another;
injecting the sample into the instrument injector for analysis of the sample; and
repeating the prior steps on each of the plurality of samples.

10. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of collecting the sample comprises the steps of:

activating a syringe plunger to expel and hold a microdrop of the solvent on the tip of the syringe;

holding the microdrop on the tip of the syringe in the sample vial for a period of time to collect the sample material in a space above the sample in the vial; and

drawing the microdrop and the collected portion of the sample into the syringe.

11. (New) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
placing a plurality of sample vials in a holder in established coordinate positions.

12. (New) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
providing a syringe cleaning solution in a known coordinate position.

13. (New) The method of claim 4 wherein the step of cleaning the syringe comprises the steps of:

moving the syringe and the cleaning vial relative to one another and
withdrawing contents of the cleaning solution into the syringe; and
expelling the cleaning solution from the syringe into a waste receptacle.

14. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of inserting the syringe into the sample vial further comprises the step of:

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inserting the syringe into the sample vial to position the tip of the syringe in a head space above a liquid sample in the vial.

15. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of inserting the syringe into the sample vial further comprises the step of:

inserting the tip of the syringe into the liquid sample in the sample vial.